

# Indecorous art



## When aesthetics subverts ethics and logic

We'll explore what happens when art stops thinking of itself as pure entertainment, as something to do for fun, to pass the time, or to ornament the dull corners of your life – when art takes on moral or political questions, or when it threatens to undermine the normal way of doing things or being in the world, or challenges closely guarded boundaries – even the normal ways of thinking of things, when it disses the limits of reason itself. When it challenges what you took art itself to be yesterday? When it starts to become troublesome, upsets apple carts, when it offends, insists on being a knick-knack from hell.

What is the warrant for this kind of behavior? (Philosophers like to ask such questions.) Does art have any internal restrictions on what it is allowed to imagine? Is it bounded by any set of outside principles (moral ones, for example) that say you can play with these ideas but *not* with those. There is something you cannot touch or disrespect. Something too serious for play... Does art fail to be art when it violates

extra-aesthetic sensibilities whatever these might be? Does it then cease to be art? And supposed it ceases to be morally/legally/politically correct? What then? If this unruliness is a concern, is it an aesthetic concern or encroachment from other autonomous realms of value creation such as logic or morality?

And what is the connection, if any, between the value and integrity of an art-object and its human creator. Suppose the piece has aesthetic value but we come to believe its creator is a moral monster? Does the opprobrium attaching to the latter taint the former? If so, why?

Is it ok for a moral (political/legal) critic, for example, to engage in art criticism? Since this is philosophy, we are not asking whether such critics actually claim such authority – of course, they do. Rather, we are asking always “what is the *rational* justification for their claim?” In which venue of value adjudication is the claim legitimate? There seem to be only three to choose from. Ultimately, these are the courts of logic, ethics and aesthetics. Each of these realms of normativity claims to be autonomous. They do not defer to each other. Yet at the same time each sometimes claims authority over the others.

Aesthetics, in particular, is distinctive in its normativity. It could even be defined as precisely *a type of normative activity that knows no bounds*. None whatsoever. Not rational or moral bounds, not political, not legal. And it only *toys* with its own, aesthetic ones. It may do so on a whim but it may be profoundly serious in the way it toys. It does not shy away from contradiction, may even revel in it. When it is being what it most essentially is and demanding of your full attention with no guarantees that you or your values will escape the encounter intact, it is the least rule-bound form that normativity takes. Artistic expression and appreciation are generous, they are the least restrictive, without being indifferent, of the three forms of normativity. Less structured and more tolerant than logic or ethics, aesthetics is normativity in its rawest form, the place from where more processed value starts. Its slack is what makes it unnerving to the essentially conservative tendencies of logic and ethics. Aesthetics is normativity that remains assertive while still conceptually youthful and pliant, and less senile and ossified than its two, more “respectable” and practical forms. We may think it the primeval form – the “mother,” so to speak – of logic and ethics.

To be clear, this topic is concerned with the conflict between aesthetic judgments and moral and rational ones because of what it reveals about the deeper and larger concept of normativity.

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The news these days is rife with controversies about celebrated artists and how they and their work become morally tainted.<sup>1</sup> How does that happen? Is art supposed to be morally responsible? It will be helpful to understand how we may think it is if we explore one of the deepest and most difficult topics in contemporary philosophy: *normativity*. There is a connection.

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1. Some might say that it is the moral character of the artist, not their work, that is the target of moral judgment. Sadly, humans appear psychologically incapable of holding to that distinction. The move from character indictment or to boycotting or suppressing the work of an artist is commonplace: Leni Reifensthal, Roman Polanski, Woody Allen, J. K. Rowling, Dr. Seuss... just to keep the list short. It happens in science and philosophy, too. Consider the case of science hero/villain [Fritz Haber](#) or great philosopher/racist [David Hume](#).

It was an early encounter with a controversy between art and morality that first got me interested in philosophy as a young person.<sup>2</sup> The conflict was between claims by moral theories that all human behavior and expression were within their purview, on the one side, and push back from some philosophers of art or aestheticians that the realm of aesthetics is *radically autonomous*, on the other. Radical autonomy means here that art does not owe anything to morality. It cannot be ethically constrained. It sets its own rules and breaks them at will. Ethics is out of bounds to insert its judgments. Many find this claim to radical autonomy more than offensive. It can seem openly immoral.

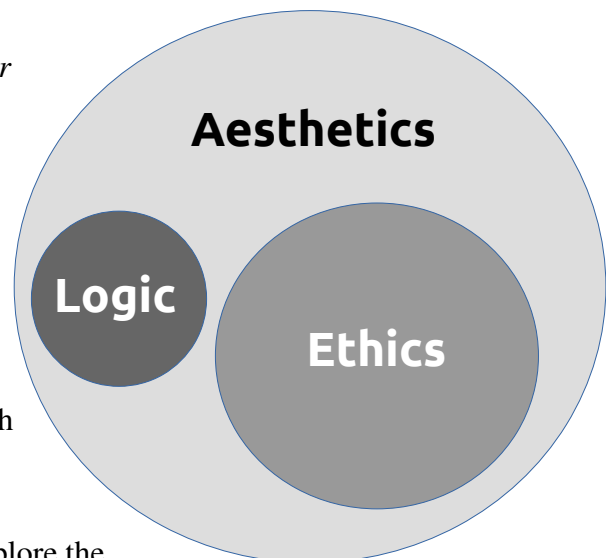
On the other side, art theorists insist that it is precisely *the unfettered imagination* which defines aesthetic experience and concern. Unfettered means exactly that. Rules outside of provisional aesthetic ones are unwarranted intrusions on art.

This conflict leads one to ask what ethics and aesthetics essentially are and how they can be so opposed to each other. What is their relation to each other? This is where the concept of *normativity* enters.

Ethics and aesthetics are species of a broader phenomenon philosophers call normativity. So is logic. These are distinct realms of normativity. And, taken together, logic, ethics, and aesthetics exhaust normativity. Jointly, these three generate the rules that govern and impose structure on experience. They set the value of things. They are behind all that involves *judgment*. Logic, ethics, and aesthetics cover, respectively,

1. what it is acceptable (or not) to *think*,
2. how it is acceptable (or not) to *behave*, and
3. what is acceptable (or not) about *every activity or experience* inclusive of the first two.

In fact, aesthetics, in the philosophical sense of concern here, is best conceptualized as *including* logic and aesthetics as subrealms of more specialized normativity. But aesthetics remains the most general form of normativity. It is raw, relatively undifferentiated, normativity. If it asserts rules and process, it does so with only provisional commitment.



We need to place aesthetic experience in context and explore the similarities and differences between moral and artistic expression and

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2. Specifically, [the debate between William Gass and John Gardner](#) on whether literary art should be centered on moral ends.

sensibilities. As we said, ethics and aesthetics are two of three general categories of the broader phenomenon that philosophers call *normativity* with logic counting as the third. Conceptually, these are distinct and arguably autonomous realms that do not easily concede authority to each other. Broadly, *normativity is the practice of stipulating that some state of affairs is to be preferred over another*. It is about bestowing value or disvalue. An agent is being normative whenever they behave as though they give a damn one way or another about something. Supposedly, only living things are normative. They take measures to preserve their physical organization – to stay alive, which of course expresses a preference, a value, an insistence that something – namely, survival – matters. But that is just the beginning of the application of the concept. We can barely remark on any experience without, in doing so, expressing normativity.

The three realms of normativity can be distinguished both by their ranges and by the stringencies of their rules – by the areas they claim authority over and by the commitment with which they adhere to their pronouncements. Logic’s is the narrowest and strictest. Then on these spectrums, ethics follows in both respects. And, lastly, aesthetics is the broadest and most forgiving.<sup>3</sup>

## Types of normativity

*Logic and ethics are... one.*  
~ Otto Weininger<sup>4</sup>

*Ethics and aesthetics are one.*  
~ Ludwig Wittgenstein<sup>5</sup>

Logic, ethics, and aesthetics are not interchangeable, but they are intimately related: they are *one* in the sense that they are family. Aesthetics is the conceptual mother,<sup>6</sup> so to speak, while logic<sup>7</sup> and ethics are

3. Or “irresponsible,” depending on whether you are inclined to be more partial to the less tolerant normativities.

4. *Sex and Character*, Part II, Chapter 7, (1903).

5. *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, 6.421 (1922). We know that Wittgenstein read and deeply admired Weininger throughout his life.

6. I say “mother” to suggest an origin. It seems that *before* there were impulses *to order and structure* experience (as logic and ethics seek to do in their respective realms of thought and human behavior) there were preferences. (The priority claimed for aesthetics here is conceptual: aesthetics may play the logic and ethical game on a whim, but the reverse does not work. Neither logic nor ethics can *play* with their rules, still less retain their conceptual integrity doing so. The conceptual priority does not entail – though it does not preclude – an evolutionary one as well. The latter is an empirical question.)

7. Mathematics and all rule-governed games are hybrids: they are subsumed under logic to the extent their rules have clout at all *as well as* under aesthetics to the extent nothing is really “forced.” You may always choose to create and play another game with its own rules; mathematics has many autonomous branches. Beauty – when it appears in mathematics – is appreciated as much for its serendipity as because it serves some preconceived aim, e.g., the fascination with [Euler’s equation](#):  $e^{\pi} + 1 = 0$ . The mathematical elegance or parsimony of the Copernican explanation of the apparent motions of the solar system appealed more to Galileo than that of the Ptolemaic. Empirically, at the time, he had no reason to prefer one over the other. Contrast this situation with ethics where charm, elegance, creativity, or any manner of “wowness” alone cut no mustard.

offspring. Moreover, combined, they exhaust the realm of normativity. The study of normativity is at the very heart of philosophy because it addresses such questions as:

- Why be logical? (What's the big deal about dealing in contradictions? If we can't get much beyond asking this question, philosophy stops in its tracks.)
- Why be moral? (As Calicles and Thrasymachus asked in Plato's *Republic*. If it is possible that someone may ask this question without being insane – and it seems it is, how may we respond?)
- And why care about aesthetics or appearances? (Why bother with inaccessible realities or hypothetical inferences? For example, isn't the goal to be *regarded by others as* moral, to *appear so* to them, not to *actually be* moral?<sup>8</sup> What is morality over and above the positive regard of others anyway? Or why is a vase of roses nicer than a plate of dog excrement as a centerpiece? Does it matter that you are a “refined” human and not a dog? And what does this “refinement” consist in?)

If these questions do not intrigue you, you likely are too incurious to be a philosopher.

**Normativity**, in general, is about expressing a value as opposed to asserting a fact.<sup>9</sup> The expression involves asserting a rule about how things *should* be in a given sphere of concern. It imposes order or structure upon experience that would otherwise be indifferent to any interest we may have. The three, collectively exhaustive, spheres of normative concern are:

1. **Logic** which has the smallest scope<sup>10</sup> and is the strictest of normativities. It purports to lay down the rules of rational thought. What assertable thing doesn't conform with its dictates need not be taken seriously. It compasses the rules of reasoning and is extremely inflexible about what is to count as one. (Ex. Contradictions are not allowed.)
2. **Ethics** which covers the rules that are supposed to govern interaction between entities for whom we perceive things may go well or not for them, including other humans, animals, other living

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8. The distinction I try to capture here reveals itself when we ask why people sometimes are *as, or more*, concerned with someone's *sincerity* than with their *honesty*? Honesty is a perfectly empirical matter. Do words and behavior cohere according to expectations? If yes, we smell honesty. But sincerity – to the extent it is not synonymous with honesty *and* I argue elsewhere that there is significant sense in which it is not – is, in principle, inaccessible to any amount of speech/behavior scrutiny. Perhaps, sincerity is not a *fait accompli*, evidence for which is in theory available, but an aspirational, even impossible, project. Someone's sincerity may not be accessible to them, let alone to others. (Indeed, I make the case that if I *claim* to be sincere, that is already a cause for suspicion.) Why does Juliet ask Romeo no less than three times whether he loves her? If he had done something to raise suspicions, the question would make sense. If, as we know, he never does anything to raise suspicion that he does not love Juliet – quite the opposite, still her question is not insane – however indeterminate it remains for her, unanswerable for him, and both for us – *forever*. If your concern never extends beyond the evidence, you only ever had honesty in view.

9. Although when facts are, in fact, *asserted* by norm-conferring entities (like us), it may be psychologically impossible for the assertion itself to be free of normativity. If we say something is *true* instead of *false*, it is difficult to disinfect this assertion of every element of *approval*. A statement's “truth value” would have to be utterly indifferent to the one asserting it in order to pull this off. Truth seems to be a *default* preference. Why? Because *we give a damn*. It takes supreme effort, if it is even psychologically possible, not to.

10. In the sense that it covers only propositions or semantic assertions. It does not structure any aspect of the empirical or phenomenal world, as the other two kinds of normativity attempt.



organisms, even ecosystems. (All moral theories about how one *should* live or how one *should* regard morally relevant beings, for example, are included here.)

3. Normativity not exhausted by logic and ethics falls within the realm of *aesthetics*.<sup>11</sup> It is the most promiscuous sphere of normativity. It includes all that somebody (or -thing<sup>12</sup>) deems would be better one way rather than another in the view of some norm-conferring entity or community. It is also the least restrictive and most open to arbitration among norm-conferring entities. (E.g., “Beauty is in the eye of the beholder.” Beauty may *not* be in the eye of the beholder but it is more comprehensible that someone may think that it is than that they should think contradictory statements may both be true, such as “it is raining” and “it is not raining.”<sup>13</sup> To argue that the contradiction is even remotely intelligible requires [sophistication in comparative logic](#). Not so in aesthetics, where contradictions are ho hum, if not part of its intrinsic charm that it deals in them. Imagine someone complaining that characters in a novel do impossible things.)

We may even define logic and ethics as forms of *aesthetics with restricted scope*. The former pretends to arbitrate the rules of intelligible thought and the latter the rules of accountable behavior.

***Why are these kinds exhaustive?*** You are being normative when you *give a damn* about something. Are there other ways of giving a damn exclusive of each of these three? We may, of course, make any number of subsortals under any of these three major ones: legal and political theory under ethics, mathematics under both logic and aesthetics... But a species of normativity alien to all three of these general categories? It seems doubtful there is one.<sup>14</sup> The suggestion here is that normative experience

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11. My use of the term “aesthetics” to cover all that is not “logic” and “ethics” is motivated by the *normative latitude* manifesting outside the latter two realms. Less precisely, at least for etiological purposes, I say the latter two realms derive from the former, conceptually and perhaps evolutionarily. But again, for purposes of this discussion, aesthetics is normativity at the *low end of stringency*. More precisely, aesthetics, as distinguished from unqualified normativity, is the normative slack *combined with awareness of itself as value-imposing*. Absent this second qualification, we would have to say animals and lower life forms engage in aesthetics. That these express normativity is clear; that they, in even a weak sense, theorize or formulate judgments concerning their value-placements is far less clear. (This latter would be “aesthetics” proper or theory-laden value imposition.) At least in the human case, however, the realm of aesthetics and that of normativity would exactly coincide were it not for the distinction concerning degrees of stringency. The discrimination underwrites the conceptual space for the “specialized aesthetics” of thought and behavior, namely, logic and ethics.

12. Not to leave out an AI, for instance.

13. When we experience conflict with our aesthetic judgments, certain stock responses are available to us: Another person is not enthused by the greatness we hear in a piece of music. After perhaps attempts at trying to convince them otherwise and failing, we may settle on such consolations as: “beauty is in the eye [or ear] of the beholder,” “there’s no accounting for taste,” or “different strokes for different folks.” Such facile excuses are harder to come by for those who plainly contradict what we are certain is true (two plus two is four) or what we know to be wrong (torturing infants). Aesthetics is radically autonomous vis-à-vis logic and ethics, but, internally, it is tolerant.

14. Science is *not* normative (supposedly, or by its own admissions). Indeed, it is principled in its *a*-normativity or even *anti*-normativity. It has set itself the task of being so. Its very *raison d’être* is, to the extent possible, to describe, not prescribe. It may and must adopt principles to govern its own practice but it cannot, on pain of fundamental inconsistency, impose these on the empirical phenomena within its range – unlike logic, ethics, and aesthetics and their subsortals. Science imports its rules from the other spheres of normativity. Science is (at least) *a*-normative *in theory*. Whether it is so in

*for us* is just organized in a way that corresponds to what we feel about acceptable *thinking, behavior, and desire*.<sup>15</sup> The late philosopher Hilary Putnam once described normativity as ubiquitous. Among experience-having entities it is that. Living things, in particular, seek to regulate their experience. It seems to go with being alive.

## Good art by bad people

One way to pick apart aesthetic and moral sensibilities is to explore where they conflict. Does good art *become* bad when you learn the artist is bad?<sup>16</sup>

Consider the cases of [Woody Allen](#), [J. K. Rawlings](#), and [Dr. Seuss](#), to name just a few recent artists who have had their work “canceled” because something they expressed as persons or artists offended somebody’s moral sensibilities. What do their moral failings – to the extent they are that<sup>17</sup> – have to do with the aesthetic merit of their work?

What exactly is the relation between art and morality? Is art supposed to toe a moral line? Or is art precisely art *because* it is not subject to prior strictures? Wouldn’t it be *moral propaganda* otherwise? True, of the three moral realms, it seems, morality is the one most prone to proselytize. It seems all-consumed with passing judgments on people and their actions – in this context, their art production which, it seems, can be used to impugn but, apparently, never to excuse them. Where does morality get off claiming such authority or priority over creativity?<sup>18</sup>

The relationship between art and morals is ancient and vexed. Some philosophers at least since Plato have been deeply suspicious of creative types. Plato banned poets from his ideal society. He had good reasons. (Having “good reasons” is compatible with being wrong.) That, despite the fact that among philosophers few since have matched him for imagination and originality! There’s long-standing tension

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practice is another matter.

15. To the extent it is organized at all.

16. There is a corresponding question about the art of people widely held up as “good” people. Can you be a proper person *and* a great artist in the sense that your work will inspire other artists and those with highly developed aesthetic sensibilities for generations to come? Is the constraint *built-in* to being a morally decent person an impediment to the kind of unfettered imaginative habits essential to cutting edge aesthetic sophistication?

17. We will assume there *are* moral failings involved in these cases for the sake of this discussion. Don’t like these examples? Pick an example where you believe there are such failings, and ask about that case. The philosophical question here, is not whether this or that is an actual case of aesthetics and ethics clashing, but whether there is *any* resolution when they do.

18. It does *precisely* that. It judges *all* human speech and behavior insofar as the sensibilities of others thereby suffer impingement – or so a moralist *rightly* argues. “Rightly,” of course, from a *moral* point of view. Logically? No. Aesthetically? Let’s hear an argument.

between the good and the beautiful, something that irked Plato, who wanted the good, the beautiful and the true<sup>19</sup> somehow to cohere if not coincide...

But aestheticians continue to ask, is art *radically autonomous*? Is it always its own thing and *never* beholden to reason or decency?

And what about morality itself—isn't it itself a wonderfully *creative* human artifact? It was not like a shiny stone whose *pre-existing* preciousness was immediately evident to its first finder. Somebody *invented* it,<sup>20</sup> no doubt hoping to enhance the *quality* of human experience thereby—a motivation not that different from the one that inspired us to first gather flowers into a vase. Survival-enhancing behavior may have been naturally selected for but not the labyrinth of justifications and theories we deck it out with. Animals don't need to excuse themselves for what they do.<sup>21</sup>

It appears we do.

## Normative encroachment

From a purely *ethical* point of view, if art has value, it is instrumental value. It helps us to stay psychologically healthy enough to engage in moral activity; it helps us “be good.” And being good, what it consists in, is not decided by aesthetic considerations. Morality decides that. Art is decorative. At best, it is an aid toward making life worth living. Its role is not to set the value of living itself or any other value in life that may conflict with the relations that *should* obtain between moral agents and what impinges on their legitimate interests. What are their legitimate interests? Ethical theories decide these. Not aesthetic theories.

But this incursion into the aesthetic realm from ethics does not sit well with all theorists of aesthetics. The opposing view, insisting on the radical autonomy of art, does not accept that moral considerations can constrain aesthetic sensibilities. What characterizes aesthetic sensibility is the free play of imagination. Nothing except a self-imposed rule has a right to interfere in what an artist, *qua* artist, may express. Aesthetics is about play. Even its rules are play things.

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19. The “transcendentals” as the Medievals called them. It is surely not a coincidence that beauty, truth, and goodness correspond to the core aims of aesthetics, logic, and ethics.

20. Invented the *discipline of demanding justification* for behavior, that is. Not to be confused with behavior conducive to group survival.

21. Taking their cues from the naturalism of their mentor Diogenes, the Cynic philosophers Crates and Hipparchia had sex in public. Why? Well, do dogs hide out somewhere to perform natural functions? What is it about us that compels us to act more sheepishly than sheep?



We have been discussing ethical incursions into aesthetic territory. But aesthetic incursion into other areas of normativity – particularly ethics – is also important because it helps explain two things that reveal the relations between the three realms of normativity:

1. Why draw the normativity circles in the way it is done above: with aesthetics *encompassing* ethics and logic, instead of giving “generic” normativity a circle of its own that encloses the other three?
2. And how can change, progress or, at least, development happen (to the extent it does) *within* a realm of normativity?

As to the first item, why claim that aesthetics encompasses the other two realms? When we say “encroachment,” isn’t this a normatively loaded term? “Encroachment” implies some person or force is out of line, overstepped its bounds. If so, from which perspective is the judgment being made? Or from within what realm of normativity does the judgment that “something has encroached” derive its authority?

I cannot see that there is any other type of normativity that isn’t covered by one of these three: that of aesthetics, logic, and ethics. Normativity doesn’t exist completely outside one of those three realms. What would such a normativity be like? Outside the mildest and most encompassing form normativity takes, namely, aesthetics, there is only an inert realm of description,<sup>22</sup> of “is” propositions, with no “shoulds” or “oughts” in sight. A place where nothing matters and nobody cares because “mattering” and “caring” are quintessentially normative activities. The slightest bit of normativity is already aesthetic, though not yet (or ever) moral or rational.

Aesthetics, in the broad sense defined here, best plays the role of the generic normativity inferred by the normative situation just described. It is sufficiently encompassing to include all the normativity that is recognizable. Moreover, it is “soft” and diffused enough to provide the raw material for the two harder, more crystallized forms, which cover the rules of rational thought and acceptable behavior.

Ultimately, then, when we pronounce an “encroachment,” we must be making an aesthetic judgment. From *their* respective locations in normative space, logic and ethics do not “encroach,” rather they exercise their rightful authority. So, if there is a place from which we can use “encroachment” with its apparent negative load, it must be from outside these locations. To retain its critical connotations, the word must be spoken from a space, still normative, but outside logic and ethics. “Encroachment” may involve moral or rational censure, but it may still carry negative valence even absent the involvement of these stricter normative forces. It’s not “nice” to encroach. It may be immoral or insane as well, but, at the very least, it is not nice.

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22. Perhaps, only a *theoretical* realm of description. See note above about the normative contamination of description.

And in which realm of normativity is “niceness” a normative term?

On the second point about normative development: the realms of ethics and logic do not have internal mechanisms for reform. They are intrinsically conservative. Their primary function is to set ground rules, not to experiment with them. They do not see themselves as in anyway optional or games you may choose to play or not play. If the rules of thought and behavior change, if their reform or development ever happens, it must be sparked from outside. From *where* outside?

Rules start out as suggestions. Where does suggestion (a kind of soft normativity) come from if not from some region outside the normatively more constrained areas of logic and ethics which do not truck in mere “suggestions”? The source of these, however, must still be normative. After all, what is the point of a suggestion if isn’t at least mildly critical? At the same time, suggestions do not start out with the clout of rules or imperatives. In time, however, they may still alter, erode, reform, or even replace, the rules they target.

This is the *subversive* aspect of art, its proneness to being indecorous. It is necessarily in tension with the more comfortably settled regions of normativity. Aesthetic suggestions may be subtle. They may deal in innuendo, or they may be ironic or in your face provocations. The imagination claims freedom to play with “what ifs.” It entertains hypotheses, has visions, is less constrained by tradition or the way we have thought about or done things in the past.<sup>23</sup> One way to define the realm of aesthetics is by pointing out its essential openness to play, to slack, to freedom. This is not to say it does not have constraints but its attitude toward constraint is ambivalent, tentative, and teasing. This very lack of seriousness or unruliness is what makes ethics wary, and logic dismissive, of aesthetics.

Plato feared this subversiveness. He wanted to rule it out of the ideal society he depicted in his most powerful dialogue, the *Republic*. Aesthetic anarchy was anathema to the orderliness he saw as critical to the design of a just community. It is important to note that Plato acknowledged the power of poetry, music, and art to shape human value. He didn’t dismiss them as mere ornaments or pastimes. It is because of its potential to upend things that artistic creation needed to be leashed: either banned or tightly constrained. It might put “ideas” in people’s heads, something not conducive to everyone minding their proper business.

Ironically, Plato was one of the most imaginative and creative thinkers in history, a poet of fantastic vision – despite himself.

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23. Of course, it may fail to be any good at any of these things. There is always a lot of dispensably bad art – aestheticizing that doesn’t even do “play” well, let alone attempt or succeed at any insight or experience. Nevertheless, the claim is, if there’s ever to be anything new and interesting this – in the capability for imagining as yet unreal things – is where it comes from. Don’t look to ethics or logic for it.

So there is a necessary tension between aesthetics and its normative offspring.

Inventing a new realm of normativity is neither necessary nor helpful. Aesthetics is already on the scene offering itself as the venue for normative challenge. It is where normative “R&D,” so to speak, happens.

## Resources

1. [An Art Made of Trust, Vulnerability and Connection | Marina Abramović | TED Talks](https://youtu.be/M4so_Z9a_u0)  
[https://youtu.be/M4so\\_Z9a\\_u0](https://youtu.be/M4so_Z9a_u0)
2. [Marina Abramović on the Power of Intuition | Innsaei \(2016\) | Apr 18, 2017](https://youtu.be/8Fs1cmYghDs)  
<https://youtu.be/8Fs1cmYghDs>
3. [Sic transit gloria mundi](https://driesverhoeven.com/en/project/sic-transit-gloria-mundi/), performance/installation piece by Dutch scenographer, driesverhoeven. “A construction site in the centre of the city serves as a model for a world in transition, where ideas about power and control begin to shift. A billboard announces the construction of a ‘monument to the fall of Western hegemony’. Tall wooden fencing separates the building site from the city. It’s an invasive gesture, the city’s people are shut out. A feeling that is amplified by posters in Arabic, Russian and Chinese. From the visitor centre on the building site one can see the purported building plans. The design, a monumental marble statue of a fallen Caucasian male, ties in with the discussion about historical statues as a symbol of Western imperialism. The only tangible indication of the monument is a gigantic white hand that is continually moved around the site.” <https://driesverhoeven.com/en/project/sic-transit-gloria-mundi/>
4. Closely related to this topic is [another we did on the work of Lars von Trier](#) last year – specifically, on his provocative film *Dogville*. The film stimulated a large body of discussion among critics and philosophers.
5. “[Is it rational to condemn an artwork for an artist’s personal immorality?](#)” James Harold, October 3rd 2020
6. “[High and Low Thinking about High and Low Art](#),” Ted Cohen, *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 51:2 Spring 1993.
7. The notion of the *radical autonomy of art* is discussed here, <https://youtu.be/mpS2QuWl0O8> using [Leni Reifenstal](#)’s infamous but remarkable piece of Nazi propaganda, *The Triumph of the Will*.

8. ["The Proper Aim of Art is Aesthetic Excellence: Royal Institute of Philosophy Annual Debate 2016."](#) Melvyn Bragg hosts Jonathan Jones and Matthew Kieran for the Royal Institute of Philosophy's 2016 debate on whether aesthetics is under extra-aesthetic obligations.
9. Christine Korsgaard is a contemporary philosopher at the forefront of exploring the idea of normativity. We may focus on her work in a future topic. Here's a [brief introduction](#) to her seminal question: the *normative* one.

## **Indecorous art presentation outline**

1. Defining the topic: it's about the relation between art and ethics and how each is related to each other and both to the encompassing concept of normativity.
2. What we mean by aesthetics, ethics, and logic and by what they all are: forms of normativity
2. How are these three different branches of normativity like and unlike each other?
4. Exhaustiveness of the three types.
3. What conflicts between each of these realms of normativity show about them and about normativity itself. Hence, the "in" in "indecorous."